



Community Participation in Prevention and Suppression of Wildland Fires



... A Case Study

Central, Utah



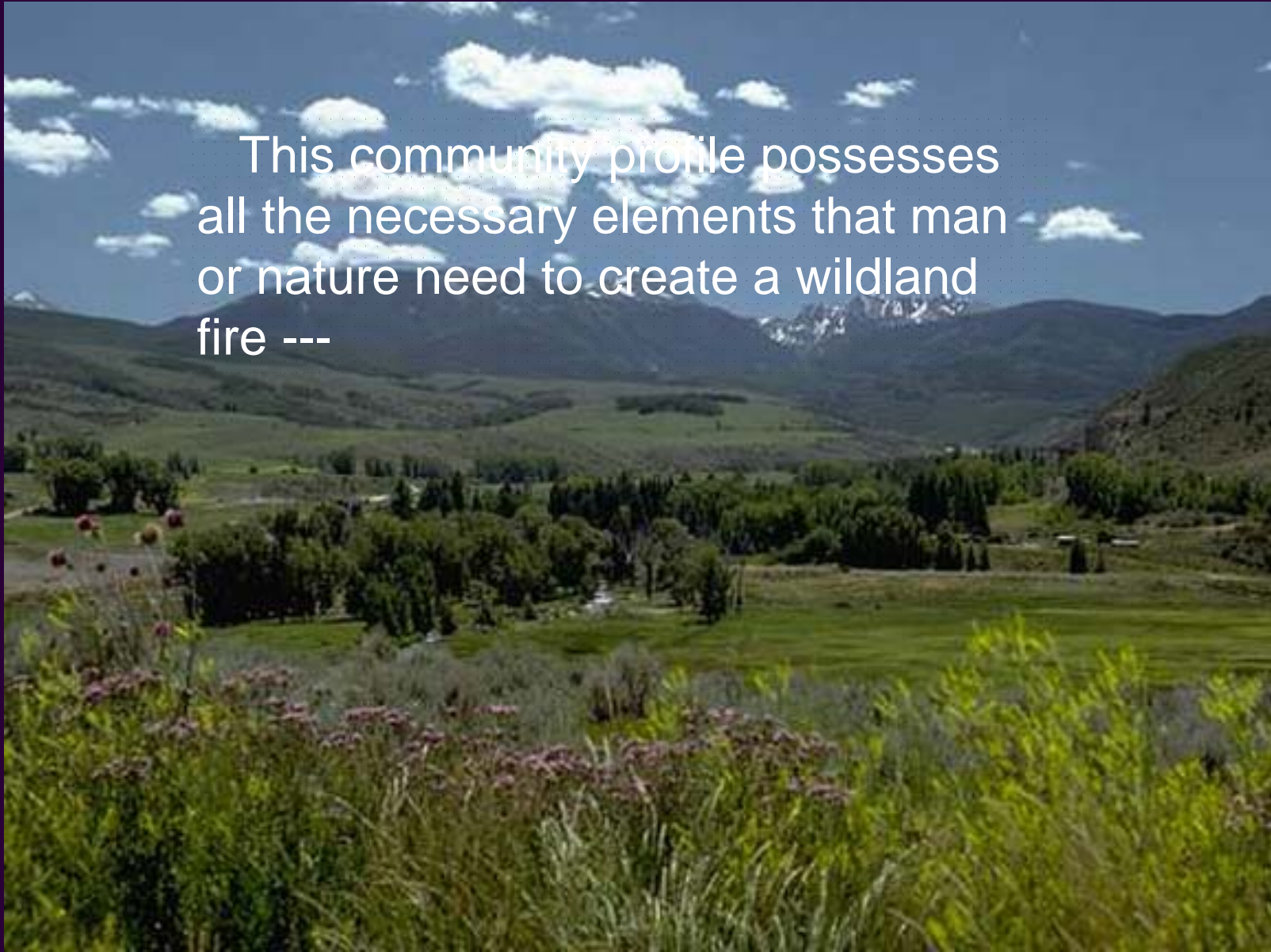
COMMUNITY PROFILE

...Small rural community

...Nestled between the Dixie National Forest and BLM Lands


...Limited resources to fight a wildland fire

This community possesses
all the necessary elements that man
or nature need to create a wildland
fire ---



The community has been –
Designated by the State of Utah as being
at extreme risk from wildland fires.

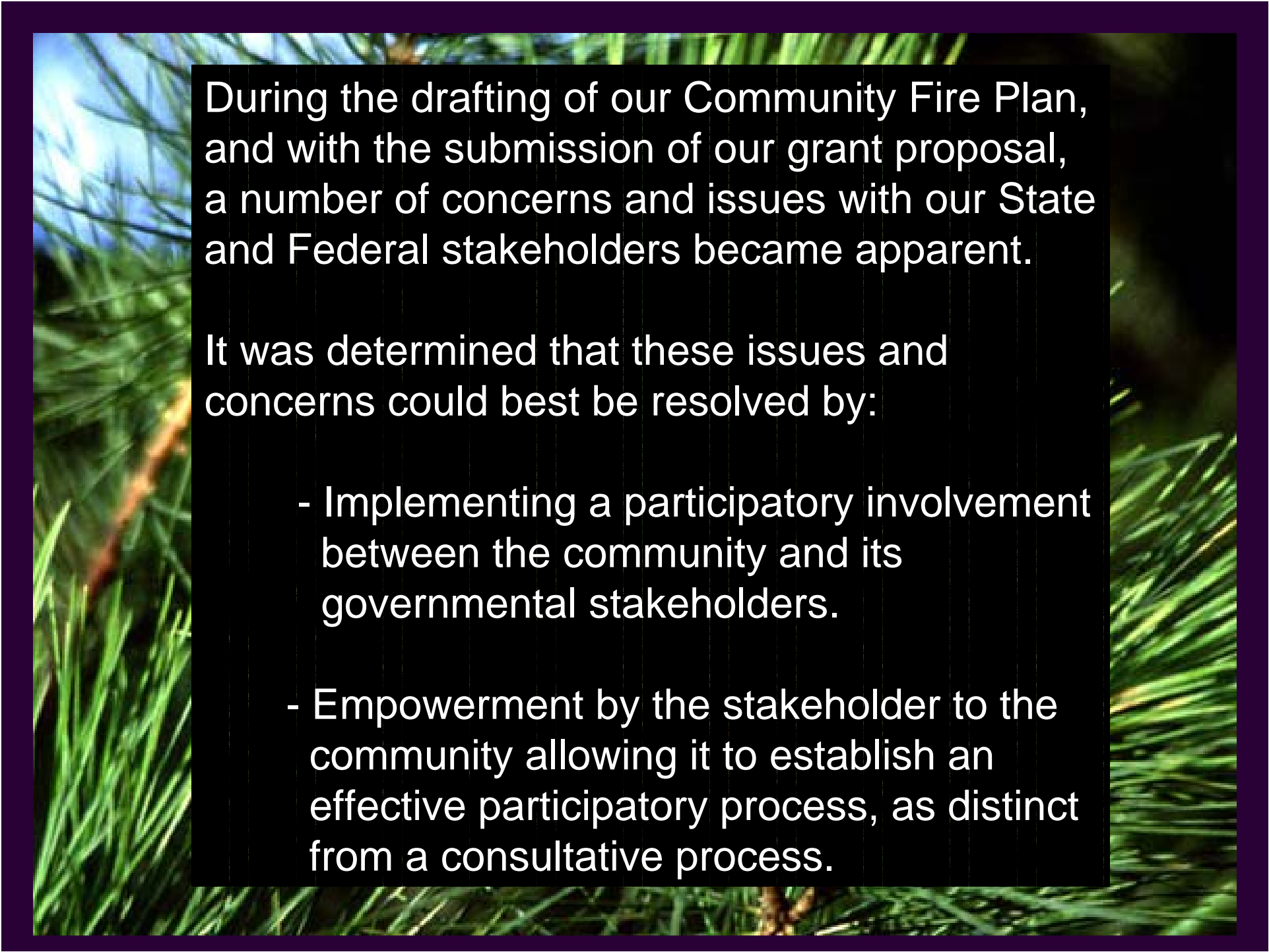




In responding to this problem—
The community bonded together and
formed a Fire Council to draft and
implement a Comprehensive Fire
Plan.

This Community Fire Plan became the basis for our community submitting a grant proposal for participation in the “2003 BLM Urban/Interface Grant Program.”

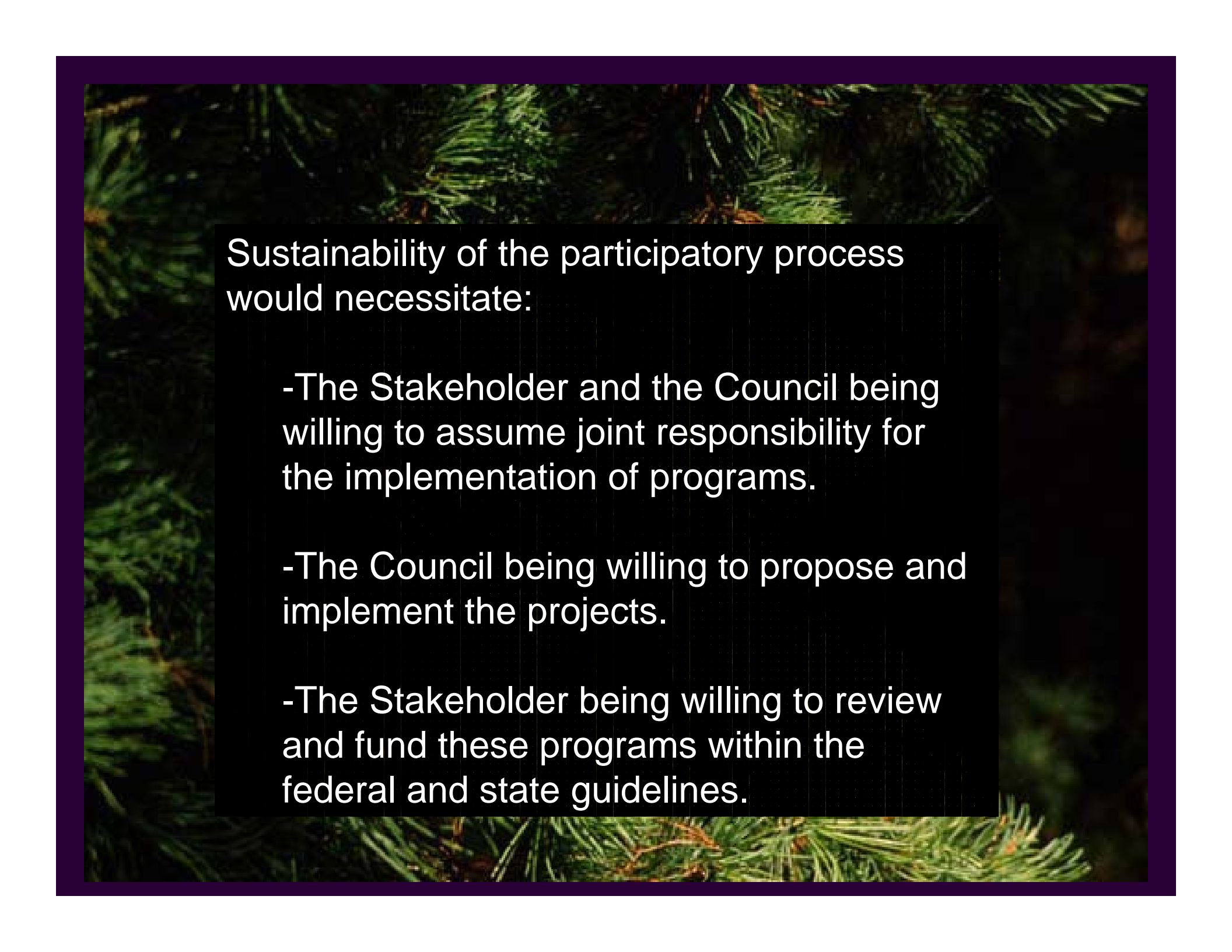




During the drafting of our Community Fire Plan, and with the submission of our grant proposal, a number of concerns and issues with our State and Federal stakeholders became apparent.

It was determined that these issues and concerns could best be resolved by:

- Implementing a participatory involvement between the community and its governmental stakeholders.
- Empowerment by the stakeholder to the community allowing it to establish an effective participatory process, as distinct from a consultative process.



Sustainability of the participatory process
would necessitate:

- The Stakeholder and the Council being willing to assume joint responsibility for the implementation of programs.
- The Council being willing to propose and implement the projects.
- The Stakeholder being willing to review and fund these programs within the federal and state guidelines.



How did we get to the
“participatory process”?

A photograph of a majestic, snow-covered mountain peak, likely Mount Everest, rising sharply against a clear blue sky. The mountain's rugged, rocky ridges are partially covered in white snow. In the foreground, a dense forest of dark evergreen trees is visible, their branches dusted with snow. The entire scene is framed by a thick, dark blue border.

It began as a –

TRANSITION PERIOD . . .

From the way it was ---

To how it is now ---

To the way it should be!

THE WAY IT WAS –

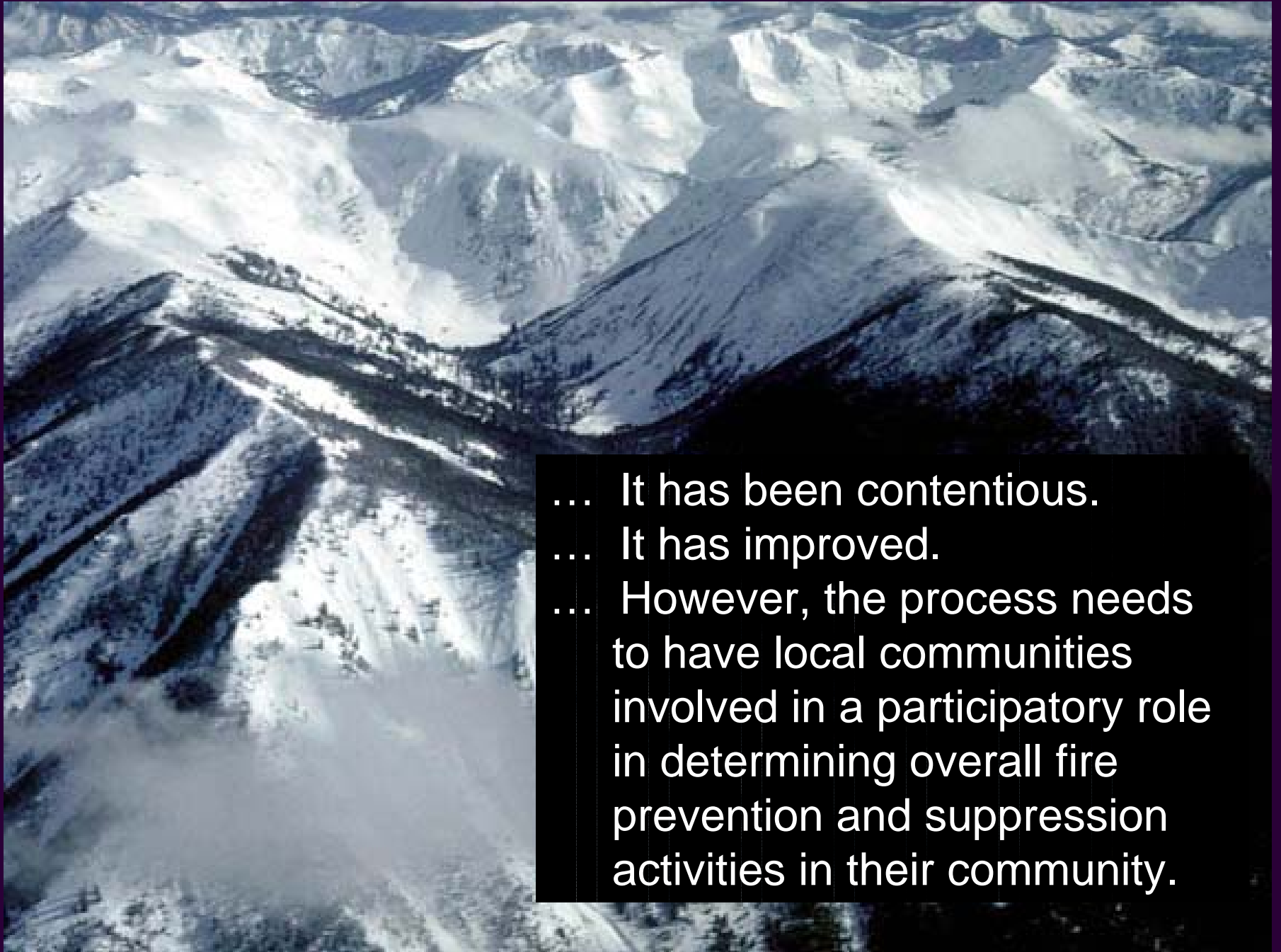
- State determined the needs of the community
- Submitted a grant application and *when approved*
- Determined how monies were spent

THE WAY IT IS NOW –

- Community makes needs known
- State obtains grant and
when approved
- Manages its expenditure

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE –

- Community addresses its needs
- Submits grant application and
when approved
- Grant monies sent to State
and
- State deposits monies with 5 County Association
of Governments (AOG) for use by community



- ... It has been contentious.
- ... It has improved.
- ... However, the process needs to have local communities involved in a participatory role in determining overall fire prevention and suppression activities in their community.

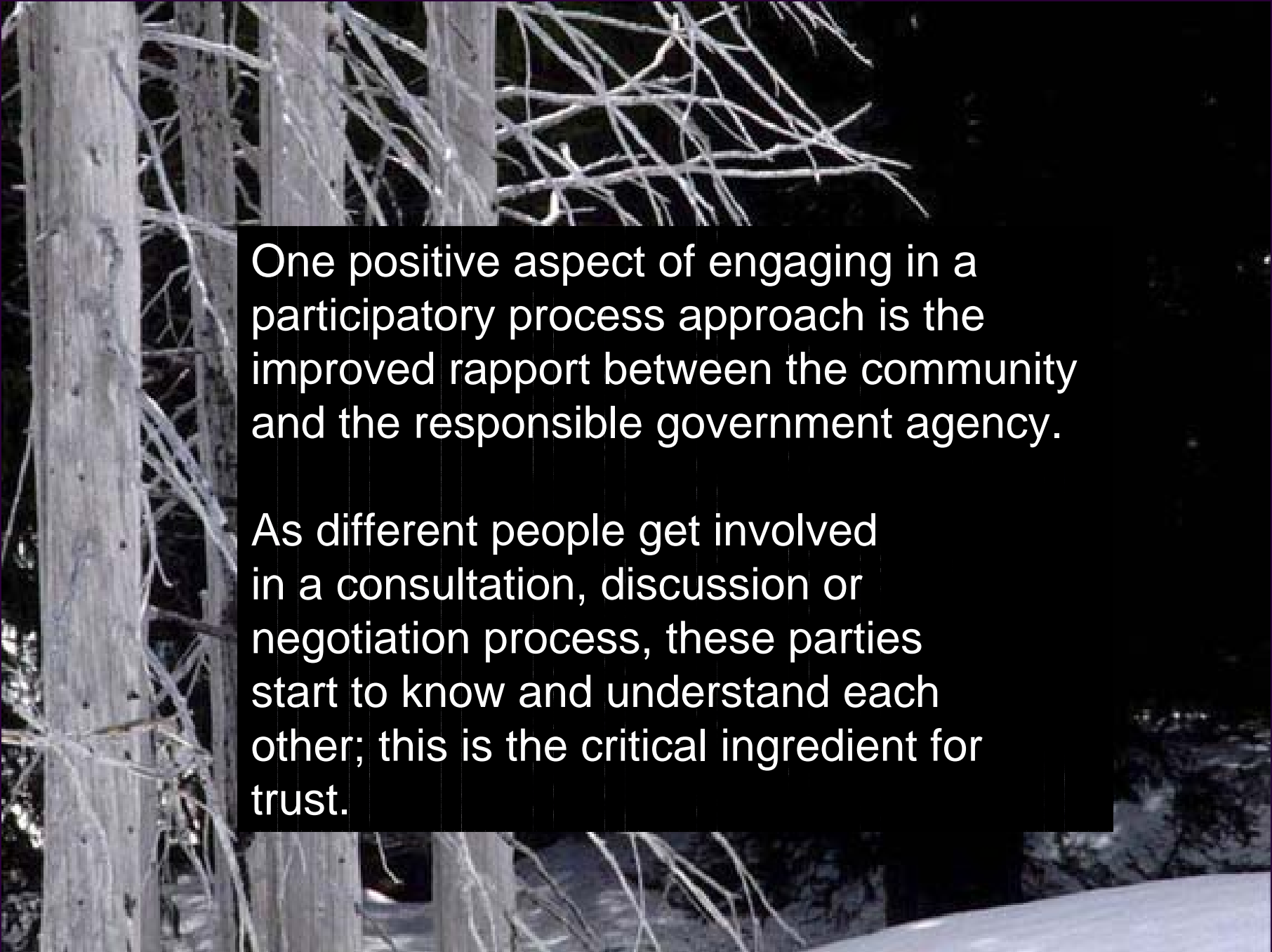
A photograph of a snowy mountain landscape with evergreen trees. The scene is covered in a thick layer of snow, with dark green coniferous trees scattered across the slopes. The sky is a pale, overcast blue.

Participation, however, means different things to different people.

... In practice, differences in perceptions and understanding are often overlooked and can derail the participatory process.

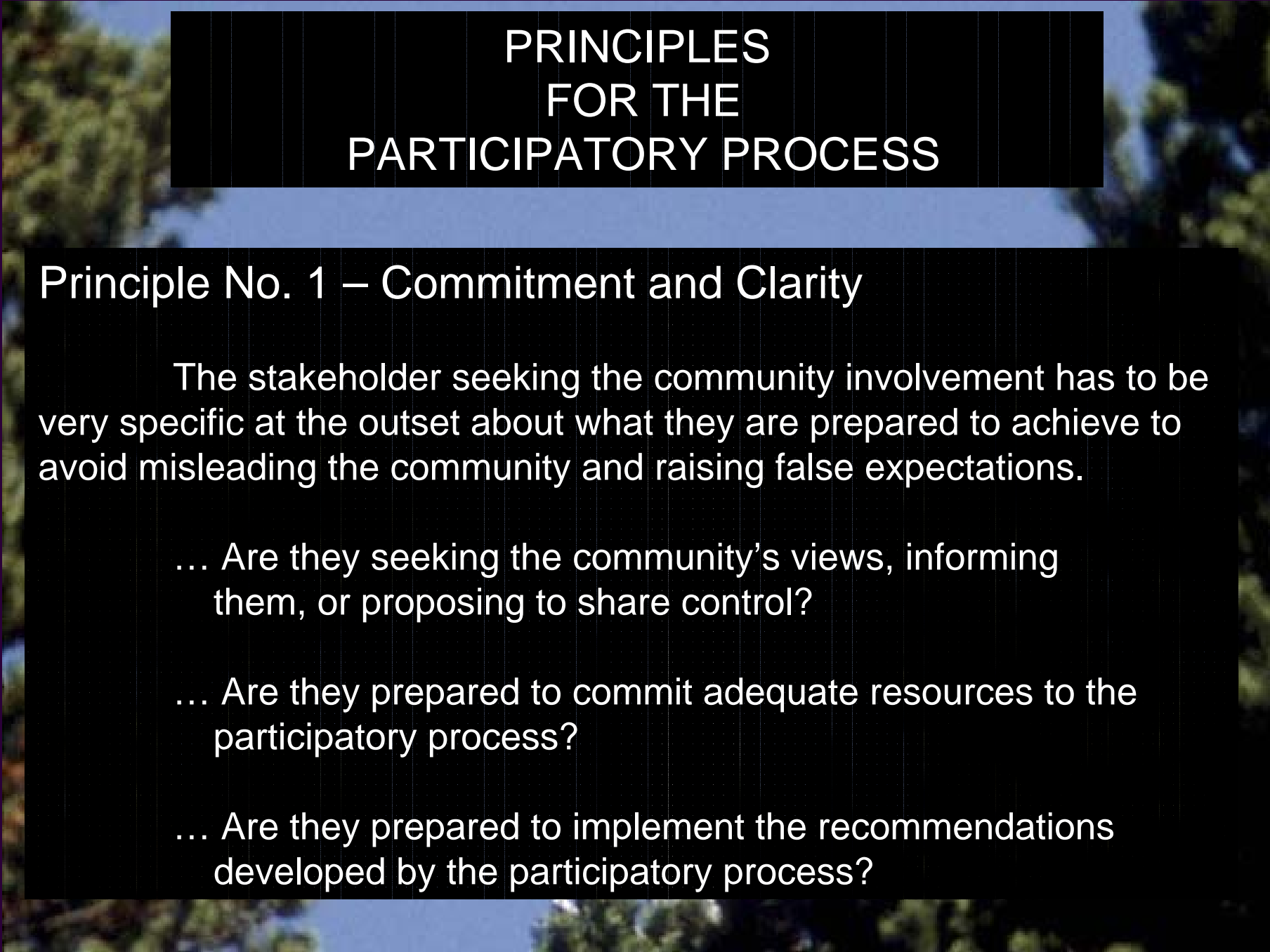
These differences are based in part on “who has the power” and —
... Often measured in terms of the power and role that different stakeholders have in the decision making process.





One positive aspect of engaging in a participatory process approach is the improved rapport between the community and the responsible government agency.

As different people get involved in a consultation, discussion or negotiation process, these parties start to know and understand each other; this is the critical ingredient for trust.



PRINCIPLES FOR THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

Principle No. 1 – Commitment and Clarity

The stakeholder seeking the community involvement has to be very specific at the outset about what they are prepared to achieve to avoid misleading the community and raising false expectations.

- ... Are they seeking the community's views, informing them, or proposing to share control?
- ... Are they prepared to commit adequate resources to the participatory process?
- ... Are they prepared to implement the recommendations developed by the participatory process?



Principle No. 2 -- Time and Group Dynamics

Adequate time allocated to the participatory process:

... Educative Process vs. Consultative Process

... Stages in the Educative Process:

- Forming
- Storming
- Normative
- Performing



Principle No. 3 – Representation

Who participates?

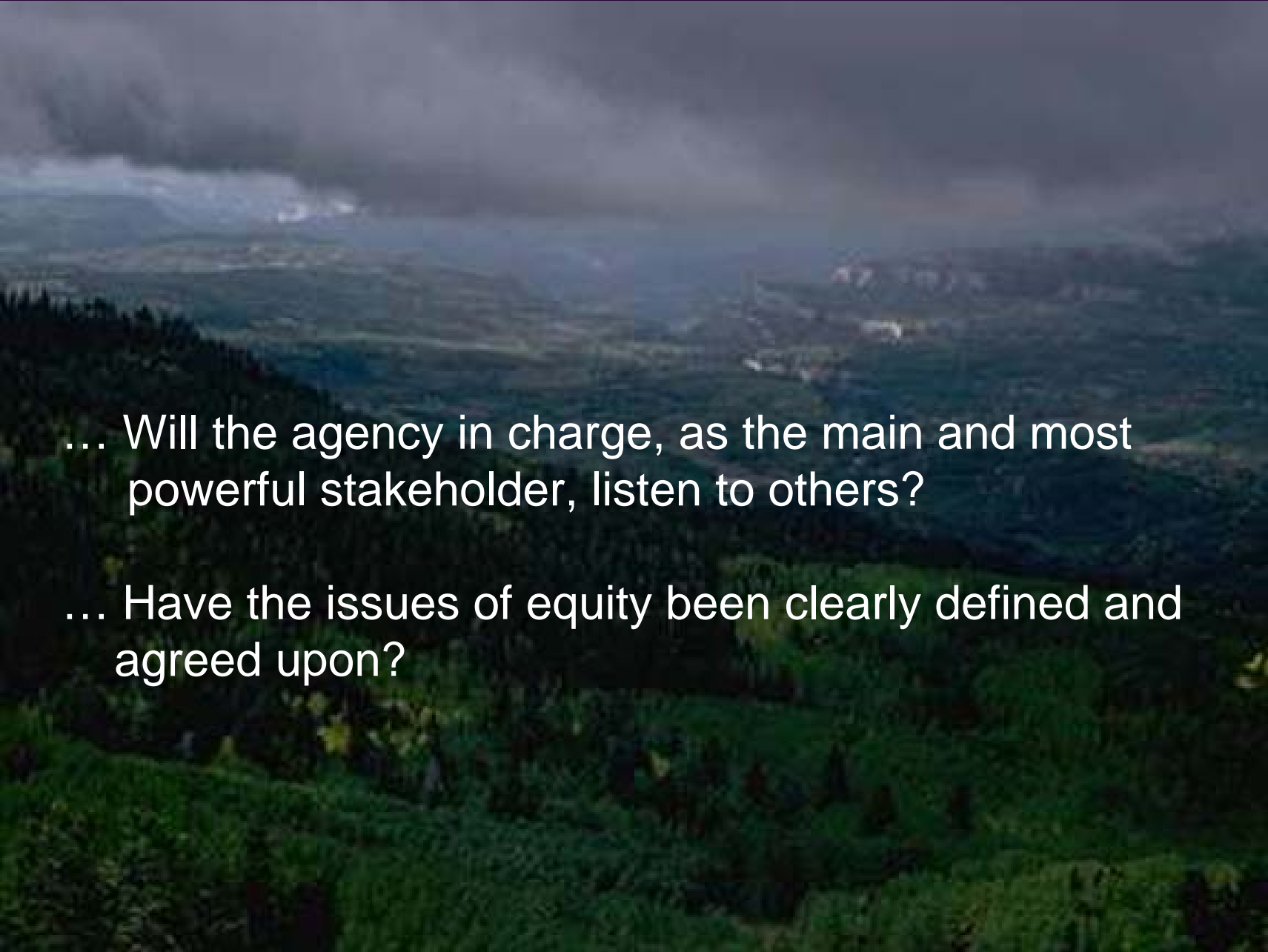
“Anybody interested has a chance to participate.”

And then --

- ... Identify the most obvious potential participants without ruling out any groups.
- ... Develop and implement an open and transparent process so that all groups and individuals are at least aware of the process being put in place.

One last issue of the representation process:

- ... Some groups have more power – will their group carry more weight?

- 
- ... Will the agency in charge, as the main and most powerful stakeholder, listen to others?
 - ... Have the issues of equity been clearly defined and agreed upon?



Principle No. 4 – Transfer of Skills

Knowledge and expertise reside within the “expert.” The need and value of transferring these skills to the community is often overlooked or undervalued.

WILL IT WORK?



FRED FRAY, Council Coordinator

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